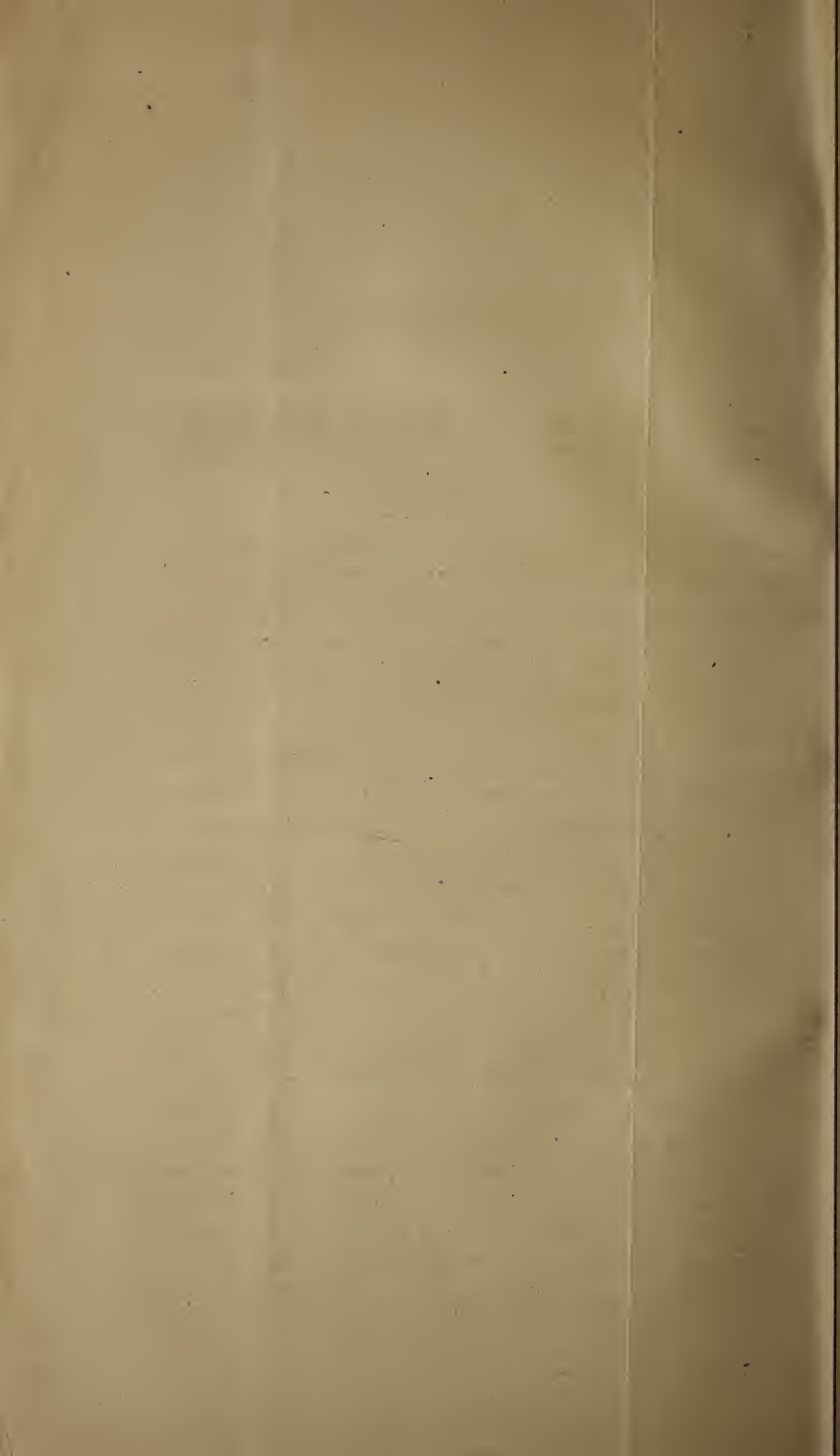


ADDRESS
OF
PROF. W. P. ATKINSON,
BEFORE THE
SUB-COMMITTEE
OF THE
BOSTON SCHOOL BOARD,
APPOINTED TO
CONSIDER THE SUBJECT OF A REORGANIZATION
OF THE BOSTON HIGH SCHOOLS.

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ADDRESS

OF

PROF. W. P. ATKINSON.

I had the privilege of hearing only the closing remarks, Mr. Chairman, of the young gentleman who has just sat down, and I cannot better begin what I have to say on the subject, than by giving the feeling which those remarks, so far as I have heard them, occasioned in me. I felt very much as I listened to his argument, as if I were listening to an earnest plea in behalf of the establishment of a manufactory of bows and arrows in these days of Sharp's rifles and six-shooting revolvers. No less preposterous, though I may have misunderstood him, appears to me to be an argument in this year of our Lord, 1869, in favor of basing the liberal education of the public High School of Boston mainly or wholly upon the study of the dead languages of Greece and Rome. The intrinsic value of those languages in their proper place and time is but a small part of the question before us. The question before us to-night is in regard to the proper course of study for a particular class of schools, not the question of the abstract merit of the classics. My own opinion is that if any instruments of mental culture are preëminently *unsuited* to the purpose we have in view, that is to say, the mental training of this class of pupils, it is precisely those, the employment of which the young gentleman has been so fervently advocating. In my view the reason why our High Schools have to so large an extent failed to meet the wants of the community, has been precisely that heretofore they have depended so much on these instrumentalities. The change which

before all others I would advocate, would be, not to drop them entirely from our High School course of study, but to place them where they belong, in a position wholly subordinate to those more important studies required by the majority of the pupils, and the demands of the community and the age in which we live.

I believe it may safely be affirmed in the first place, that the old plea that the study of the Greek and Roman classics has a certain mysterious *disciplinary* value for the mind beyond that of any other studies, so that they are to be used as a sort of preliminary whetstone to sharpen all boys' wits upon before they can successfully begin those other studies which are to be at the foundation of their life-work,—I believe that this educational theory may now be ranked among exploded superstitions.* *Every* study, it is now beginning to be seen, is a mental discipline just so far as it is pursued thoroughly and by proper scientific methods; and it is beginning to be seen, further, that the study of the classics themselves, if pursued as they usually are in our schools, by most bungling and unscientific methods, has been furnishing one of the worst systems of mental discipline that ever was devised, when we take into view the mental wants of its recipients, the hundreds of young men who have heretofore received this pretence of a liberal education. Without denying, therefore, that when properly studied the languages of Greece and Rome may furnish the foundation for a liberal education, the two questions we have to ask ourselves are: first, whether as usually studied among us they do furnish a liberal education at all, and secondly, whether, even if studied in better ways and to better purpose, they would furnish *the* liberal education best suited to the wants of the majority of lads attending the public High Schools of Boston.

I will pass by the first question with the simple remark that I think that the classical instruction of America, taken at its actual average, and viewed in its actual results, furnishes simply an example of wasted time, and misdirected energy. The average classical education of American boys is shallow, superficial, and

* See this point well handled in Prof. D'Arcy Thompson's wise and witty little book, "The Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster."

unsound, for it is merely a cramming to meet the exigencies of a college entrance examination. It is conducted by teachers who are not themselves, as a rule, in any sense good classical scholars; it is pursued by the boys with no hearty living interest in their work, but simply under the artificial stimulus of fear of an arbitrary examination; it is abandoned when that stimulus ceases to act, leaving no fruit of sound or valuable knowledge behind it. The classical education of vast numbers of our college boys is a transparent sham. I should be almost afraid to give my opinion as to the per-cent of *real* classical scholars who are the only fruit of so much wasted time and opportunity.

These facts in regard to our so-called classical education are so patent that I imagine they will hardly be disputed. If it were not for that prevalent superstition I just mentioned, that in spite of its notorious failure in producing real fruit, there is yet some sort of mysterious *disciplinary* value in all this abortive labor, they would long ago have challenged the attention of a community not very tolerant of useless work. Their existence to-day, and the hold the system has upon the community, are a striking evidence of the power of old tradition in maintaining an antiquated method long after it has ceased to have any real efficiency. I think the time is coming when it will appear amazing and almost beyond belief, that in this age and this nation, the only road to admission to our highest seminaries of learning, was through an absolute devotion during six or more of the best years of boyish life to so barren a study of two dead languages of antiquity; while young men were freely admitted in absolute ignorance, so far as school preparation was concerned or college examination had influence, of everything that constitutes the real knowledge of the nineteenth century. We have a noble language and a noble literature of our own, and they are not examined in these, and consequently arrive at the age of seventeen with a most contemptible and inadequate knowledge of their mother tongue. A vast domain of scientific knowledge has been conquered and annexed to the world's wisdom, since the time when Greek and Latin were almost its sole representatives; they are not examined in it, and consequently they arrive at the age of seventeen with almost no knowledge of that; so that just

as Gibbon said in his day, that "a finished scholar may emerge from the head of Westminster or Eton, in total ignorance of the business and conversation of English gentlemen in the latter end of the eighteenth century," it may be said of college preparation in our day that a young man may enter an American college at the age of seventeen in almost total ignorance, so far as his school is concerned, of everything which will fit him for the duties of an American citizen in the middle of the nineteenth century.

If the evil were confined to the small minority of our young men who enter our colleges, it would be bad enough; but its influence extends far more widely. It perverts our whole public school system. Notwithstanding the fact that at any given time it is only a very small percentage of the pupils of one sex in any given High School who are preparing for college, the whole course of study of that High School is adjusted to meet their wants. The best energies of the best teacher are usually consumed in their instruction, and the teacher has been selected with special reference to that work, and being himself the product of the system, is quite unfitted for any other; so that the wants of the great mass of the pupils are postponed, and their instruction left in inferior hands. If the city is, like your own, large enough to maintain two schools, such is the prestige of the classical course, that a merely English school is looked upon as of quite inferior value, the term liberal is denied it, and the chief function of the school is supposed to be to furnish boys with a sufficient knowledge of geography, arithmetic and book-keeping to make good candidates for the counting-room. Whatever higher discipline there is, comes exclusively in the hard dry form of abstract mathematics.

This state of things is the more absurd inasmuch as the college boy, though put through this pedantic antiquated drill all through the best years of his boyhood, in order merely to gain admission to college, finds *after* his admission that a modern spirit has penetrated our best colleges. He then has a free choice given him between classical learning, and the pursuit of many branches of modern science and modern literature; but when he turns eagerly, as the whole spirit of modern life leads him to turn, to those sciences and literatures, he has to sigh in vain for the precious years

of boyhood now gone by, in which he might have laid the proper foundation for such knowledge. He finds himself with senses untrained, with habits of inductive reasoning to be begun, ignorant of his mother tongue, with all the foundations yet to be laid. He finds himself a man in years, and a child in English and scientific training. What wonder that he so often goes back in despair to his Latin and Greek vocables of which he does know a little, and thus furnishes, in his disgust at unfamiliar studies, a cheap triumph to the pedant.

I maintain that from beginning to end, Mr. Chairman, this is all wrong, and that so long as we continue the effort to base a liberal American education solely on the Greek and Latin languages, we shall have the same melancholy failure. For the higher American education thus far is a failure, inasmuch as, considered as a system, it produces neither good scholars nor good scientific men. Our good scholars are few and far between, and our men of science and our men of practice are self-educated. The glory of our American system thus far is that it teaches *all* the people to read and write.* That is a great glory and I would not disparage it; but the time has come when we need something more, and I maintain that for the majority of our young people that is absolutely not to be found in the direction of an exclusive study of Latin and Greek, but in quite another direction. That we shall still need classical scholars I cheerfully admit. So we shall still need Hebrew and Chaldee and Sanskrit scholars. So we shall have, I hope, students of the Eskimo dialects and the languages of New Mexico. But American popular education will never be based on the study of Eskimo. As little, in my opinion, can it be *based* on the study

* A writer in a recent number of the English *Saturday Review*, discussing the subject of English popular education, says: "No one can have the most superficial acquaintance with the mental condition of our large middle classes, without perceiving a great and widening gulf which separates reading from education. Academies and the three Rs have achieved at least the very definite "results" of showing that the outside and merely mechanical appliances of education may be brought to a very respectable degree of perfection without any corresponding development of intellectual power." A better description could hardly be given of the fatal weakness of our present methods of public school instruction.

of Greek, however wide apart those two languages may be in point of absolute value.

In saying this I am by no means arguing as the advocate of what is called a utilitarian as contradistinguished from a liberal education. I distinctly recognize the existence of an ideal *liberal* education as the proper aim of all our educational efforts. The question for me is, what constitute the proper ingredients of that ideal liberal education for an American in this nineteenth century? If we can answer that we shall have a clew to guide us in laying out a course of study for a Boston High School.

Now in regard to this phrase, liberal education, I lay down two principles — that its essence does not consist in the mere capacity to utter any shibboleth, whether Greek, Latin or Hebrew, but that the essence of liberal education consists in *symmetrical mental development*. Any course of study that gives that is a liberal course of study; any course that does not is illiberal; and so far from its being the peculiar monopoly of any particular course, many courses or sets of studies, mingled in many various proportions, can give it — proportions to be varied according to special circumstances and wants and occasions. For, further, I maintain that though a course or method of study may be useful which is not liberal, *no* course of study can be liberal which is not useful, — useful not in the narrow, but in the high and noble sense of that much-abused word; and accordingly I find that the most illiberally educated of all men is a classical pedant, for of all men he is the most useless.

But when we have once admitted this idea of usefulness even into our idea of a liberal education, instead of stigmatizing it as “mere utilitarianism,” we have to ask ourselves “useful for what?” And I answer that the aim of an American education system should be to make a generation of liberally educated American citizens, men and likewise women; men and women, that is, equipped with the knowledge of the nineteenth century, and not of the ninth; to act the part of free, intelligent, self-governing human beings, and to do the work which their country and generation set before them. There is no absolute ideal education, good for all times and places. You want a live man or woman as the pro-

duct of your education, not an abstraction, nor a member of an idle cultivated "class." The very idea of a higher education in this country must be something that all can aspire to, though the time may never arrive when all shall reach it. The idea at the foundation of a classical education is an exclusive idea, — it is a class education. Now the theory of our institutions admits of no such idea as that of an idle, or useless, or privileged class. If Greek, therefore, or any other study claims to enter our curriculum, it must be on the ground of some *use* that it subserves, material or spiritual, and only so far as it subserves such use, and just in proportion to its importance in this point of view must be its proportionate weight as an ingredient.

It is not plain, therefore, that Greek and Latin as ingredients in the liberal education of literary men and philologists — and I would be the last to underrate the value of such men — is one thing; Greek and Latin as ingredients in the equally liberal, that is, equally symmetrical, education of a vast majority of well educated men, must be quite another thing? My conception of a liberally educated American people, my conception of an *educated* republic of the future, a republic really educated by institutions of its own growth, the product of its own social organization, not borrowed from Europe or the Middle Ages, *must* include liberally educated merchants, farmers, manufacturers, mechanics, engineers, and all the rest; and my conception of their liberal education is, that inasmuch as it embraces the element of usefulness, it makes them *good* merchants, farmers, mechanics, engineers, just as my conception of a liberally educated philologist or lawyer is, that it makes him a good philologist or a good lawyer; and that however varied our courses of liberal training may become, they will all agree in this, that they will *all* equally conduce towards making cultivated men and women and good citizens.

If we do not keep such an ideal as this in view in the management of our public schools, we may as well give up the thought of national education altogether, and leave learning to be still, as heretofore, the monopoly of privileged classes or privileged professions, while the masses shall still content themselves with reading their catechisms. But while privilege, and monopoly, and protec-

tion are fast passing away from all other spheres of human activity, and while in England, the very cradle of this exclusive system, they are vanishing as the people advance to power, are we to present the absurd spectacle of a half educated republic superstitiously clinging to the skirts of a system repudiated in the home which gave it birth?

Looking at the subject from this point of view, when we come to ask ourselves what ought to be the ingredients which should enter into the course of study of Boston High School boys and girls, we must first take a general survey of all studies which can possibly be pursued by boys and girls at the particular period of their education embraced by a High School course, and we must combine these in such proportions as best suit the wants of the classes embraced in these particular schools, and no others. Now, Mr. Chairman, if I were to say briefly that this object might be attained in a rough way by exactly inverting the order of studies as at present pursued in the Boston High Schools I think I should not be very far wrong. At present the Boston Latin School is the most prominent, and in its course of study the two subjects Greek and Latin may almost be said to swallow up the rest. English and modern languages, mathematics and science, and the fine arts, are all subordinate, and so subordinate that some of these subjects may practically be said to have no place at all. The whole strength of the most prominent school in the city may practically be said to be engaged in preparing a mere handful of boys for the narrow and antiquated college entrance examination, and the course of study of the whole of the school is almost entirely governed by this paramount consideration. We turn to the other High School for boys, a school which ought equally and in the truest sense to be a school of "liberal" learning, and we find it degraded in public estimation almost to the level of a "Business College."

Even if I adopted the vulgar and generally received educational theory that there are two distinct styles of education, a "liberal," with classics for a foundation, and a "utilitarian," with arithmetic, book-keeping, etc., as a basis, I still might argue that having regard to the number of recipients, the latter course would for Boston public school boys outweigh the former in importance a hundred

to one; and that though it might be incumbent on a wealthy city like Boston to make proper provision for the preparation of a handful of her boys who wish to go to College, yet it is a gross abuse to have the course of study of hundreds of others who never go there bent from its true direction, and the resources of her most expensive school all employed for this subordinate object. Even on the most favorable view, the Boston Latin School as at present organized has a prominence in her system which cannot possibly be justified. For though I should exalt the value of a classical over a utilitarian course of study as extravagantly as the most bigoted advocate of the classics, yet I think even he will not venture to estimate very highly the value of a mere smattering of classical learning, which is all that the majority of the boys even of the Latin School ever get — that majority, I mean, which never reaches college. I say it with all respect to the Head-Master, of whose own classical learning I have a high appreciation. It is not true in such a case as this, that, as we say, half a loaf is better than no bread. Half a journey, when one never reaches one's destination, is sheer waste of time. The instruction of the Latin School, if it were ever so good of its kind — and I will not enter into that question — is in the main wasted, because it is given to recipients who can make no use of it. It is like equipping pedestrians with spurs, or travellers by land with nicely built wherries.

In putting the case thus I have been assuming the correctness of the distinction made by the advocates of classical studies. But I have myself no faith whatever in the reality of this antithesis between "liberal" and "utilitarian." No course of study deserves for a moment to be called liberal that does not directly serve some noble use; and on the other hand the most utilitarian of so-called practical studies is not pursued as it should be so long as it is not pursued in truly "liberal" ways. The antithesis is a wholly false and misleading one.

If we turn from these erroneous popular views and look at the subject in the light of a truer theory, we shall find that there is one element of a true symmetrical education represented by the present classical course and another by the utilitarian course, and that

both are equally necessary to our idea of a good education, and that both suffer by being divorced from one another. Dividing all studies broadly into two divisions, those relating to matter and those relating to mind, physical and metaphysical, or by whatever other terms we distinguish the world without from the world within us, I find that the classical course represents the latter, but represents it at the present day in a wholly antiquated and inadequate manner. Who would deny for a moment the importance of language-training as a leading factor in any true scheme of education? But who at this day can defend the old-fashioned and exclusive teaching of Greek and Latin during the period of boyhood as the true representatives any longer of language-training in a scheme of popular education? They are not any longer even the representatives of our higher philology. With one of the noblest languages that ever existed for our mother-tongue, and with modern languages which are becoming almost a necessity of every-day life, and with boys, the majority of whom have but scant time to acquire these, why do we persist in wasting some of the best years of their lives in the study of Greek grammar? Why not leave it to the scholars who will make some good use of it, and to the literary men of whose training it forms a proper part? And on the other hand, why on the plea that Latin is taught in the Latin School, deprive the boys of the English High School of that knowledge of Latin which is necessary to them for the right understanding of English? Grant that a few boys will still need to be crammed to meet the absurd and perverse demands of the present college examination — let them be relegated to a room by themselves and to the hands of a competent crammer; but I do not see why the language-training of the great majority of the Latin School boys should in any material respect differ from the language-training of the English High School boys. Both in my judgment might profitably be taught at least a minimum of Latin; both should be taught their mother-tongue to some good purpose, though they are not now: both should learn French; both might profitably learn German in less time than is now wasted on Greek. And all should engage in those ethical studies which belong with language-training. They

should read History and Biography intelligently, not merely be crammed with names and dates ; they should understand the laws and constitution of their country ; they should learn *in school* the fundamental principles of political economy and social science. All these things are either utterly neglected or most inefficiently taught ; yet we cannot have such a thing as a sound popular education without them.

If we turn now to the other great division of studies we find that it equally suffers from this unnatural divorce. As Nature herself has interposed an obstacle to the barren study of words by ordaining that before words there shall first come the things words stand for, things material as well as things spiritual, and as it is found that in the natural development of the youthful mind, the study of things material comes *before* the study of abstractions, and must be its foundation, it follows that the study of the elements of the natural and physical sciences are not specialties to be shut up in a few advanced technical schools, but should form just as much a part of *all* education as language itself, — nay, that language itself is utterly barren without them, as witness that stultifying study, English grammar, as now taught in our primary and grammar schools. But, Mr. Chairman, in spite of this fundamental principle of all good education, what do you suppose would be the result of an examination of the boys now in the Latin School, or of the present freshman class in Harvard College, in the elements of natural and physical science ? I think it would be a very melancholy result indeed ; for it is the present practice of our schools to educate candidates for college up to the age of seventeen, without any knowledge of the world they live in, on the plea that the college does not require it, and they can't spare time from their Greek. And similarly — and here I do not speak without some personal experience — an examination of the graduates of our High Schools generally, as to their knowledge of natural history and natural philosophy as well as in regard to their appreciation of English poetry and English literature, and the amount of it they had really read to any good purpose, would lead to some startling results, and might diminish the loudness of that chorus which is continually rising in praise of the perfection of our public school system.

But I am not satisfied with this twofold division of knowledge into physical and metaphysical. Properly the division is threefold, physical, metaphysical and æsthetic ;— Science, Philosophy (including Philology) and *Art*. We can have no true symmetrical culture without the recognition of Art as an essential element in all education that is worthy of the name. Physical science at the present day may be left to maintain her own ground ; she needs no help when all the strongest tendencies of the age are in favor of giving us even an extreme and disproportioned bias in her favor. Our task is only to place the study of physical science in its proper *place* in our school curriculum, and I would place its beginnings very early. Philosophic studies will never lack support while they furnish such appropriate nutriment to the acuteness of the Yankee mind. Perhaps the strange reverence our people show for the practice of cramming their children with the abstractions of grammar, at an age when they are quite incapable of comprehending them, may be traced as an inheritance from the training — and it was their only philosophic training — which our grandfathers received in the hair-splitting mysteries of Puritan catechisms. And I am inclined to trace the kindred superstition in favor of employing classical studies as the sole instrument of liberal training to a similar source ; that it was because the dim and faint conceptions of Greek *art* thus acquired were the only representatives in their education, of æsthetic culture, and the feeling that, spite of all Puritan prejudice, the love of art is an element in human nature. The college boy did hear of Athens, and Pericles and Phidias, did read, though usually to very little purpose, his Homer and his Aeschylus, and did come in contact with perhaps a few minds who had read them with real advantage. This told at least for something — for how little we may know if we ask ourselves what proportion of the graduates of Harvard College, in the past, have studied the Greek classics to such good purpose as really to have entered into the realm of classic art or the spirit of classic poetry.*

*To attempt to use the nice processes of *real* classical culture as the chief instrument of popular education is much, it seems to me, as though one were to employ a Raphael to paint signboards : and hence it comes that the classical education of the one Greek mind in every hundred is

But now that the hatred of Art which sprung from Puritan narrowness has so died out that we see the most puritanic of sects building the costliest of Gothic churches ; when we are beginning to adorn our cities at least with bad monuments and worse statues : and on the other hand free galleries of painting and sculpture are beginning to be collected, to teach us how to make better ; when a love for true music has really begun to develop itself among us ; now that English as well as classic poetry is thought worthy of study, why should not Art be recognized directly as well as indirectly in our popular education ? Boston has nobly led the way by making vocal music a fundamental element in the teaching of all her public schools, from the highest to the lowest. I hope to see her take another step, and to see good drawing supplant bad, and the art of drawing recognized as quite as much a necessity, and little of a luxury, as the art of writing. There are as many born artists on the benches of the humblest primary schools to-day, as in the most exclusive private schools of the wealthy ; and on the other hand, the art of drawing in its humbler departments should be reckoned as much a necessity for the young mechanic as the art of reckoning.*

To do these great subjects justice, Mr. Chairman, would be to write a treatise on Education. The main remedy that I would suggest for the defects in the course of study of the Boston High Schools is the breaking down of the wall that separates them. At present the training of the Latin School is narrow and pedantic, and of the English High School cold, hard, and in a low sense utilitarian, simply for want of an ingredient which each might supply the other. It is preposterous that the Latin School boys should not be taught science ;

spoiled, while that of the ninety-nine others who need something else is perverted ; and the classics are trodden in the mire of a superficial teaching which knows of Greek and Roman Literature nothing but the husk, and of the spirit of Greek Art nothing at all.

* See on the subject of Art as a factor in Education the wise words of J. S. Mill, in his St. Andrews address ; and see also a book which deserves to be more widely known, "Hiatus, the Void in Modern Education." London : Macmillan, 1869.

there is no good reason why the English School boys should not feel some of the influence which true classical culture gives. Both should assuredly learn their mother tongue and really know its literature. Both should study modern History and the political and social organization of the world they live in. Both should feel the liberalizing influence of true Art. In both the true period must be found when abstract grammatical studies should be begun, and in my judgment it is a very different period from that at which they are begun at present. I think that no boy's language-training will suffer if the abstract study of grammar should be postponed to the age of fourteen. Let him be left till that age to accumulate ideas and to learn language by the right use of it. No language ever yet was learned as early or as well as it might be, which was begun by the abstract study of its grammar. The reason why our children do not learn the use even of their mother tongue and know so little of what is written in it, is because their energies are consumed in a futile attempt to master bad treatises on its grammar in the lower schools; in precisely the same way that nine-tenths of our college boys are made to hate the ancient classics in the upper ones.*

If a fusion were thus made of the ingredients of the two school courses, and then if school studies were arranged in what all enlightened teachers are beginning to see is the order of nature; and if at the same time there should be made, as we may perhaps reasonably hope there will, a change in the character of the present college entrance examination, such as will bring it into true harmony with the present improved course of college study, the conflict which now exists between the character and aims of the two schools would almost be done away, and I see not why one institution with broad and liberal aims and liberally organized, with a man at its head of the broadest and most liberal cul-

* I have heard it remarked by a business man that in nothing were business men of ability so deficient as in the faculty of *expressing* their ideas. The remark is very just; but if the teaching of English were properly understood in our public schools there would be no ground for such complaint. The English language is precisely what is *not* taught to any good purpose, and the prevalent classical superstitions are I think responsible in a great measure for the defect.

ture that could anywhere be found, would not serve a vastly better purpose than two constructed upon the principles of a narrow and antiquated exclusiveness. The wants of the minority of boys destined for college, or for the other minority destined for a scientific school, need in such a school come into no conflict with those of what must be always the great majority of pupils; those, namely, who are to enter the walks of active life without enjoying the privileges of the higher institutions: while their own privileges would be greatly enlarged and their school studies enriched and liberalized by coming in contact, even at school, with all the liberalizing influences of an institution in which the foundation for higher instruction was being laid by a portion of the pupils. Such a school should be distinctly a *school*, and should never aim at being a college — for a college filled with boys is of all institutions the most worthless — but it might and would be to boys during the period of boyhood all that the college ought to be to them afterwards in the period of young manhood. I think that boys would not hate such a school. And in such a school courses of study might be formed, with great economy of time and labor, to meet all the varying wants of different classes of recipients.

The example of Europe is sometimes quoted in favor of specialization, but the educational example of Europe is far more likely to mislead than to guide us. We may safely imitate the thoroughness of European teaching — I wish we had begun in our schools to have a conception of such thoroughness — but in imitating the *form* of European institutions we shall, nine cases in ten, be only copying antiquated errors belonging to social systems radically different from our own. The High School education for American boys and girls should be of uniform type and quality, and ought with minor modifications to prepare them equally well for an American college or an American scientific school; or stopping short of that, prepare them really well for active American life. The college and the scientific school themselves should be only the higher classes of the High School. By and by perhaps we shall have a university to crown the whole.

I know what obstacles exist to the realization of any such scheme as this. On the one hand are the old-world pedantries which still

cling about our college, but which now that its management is passing more and more into young and energetic hands we may look to see happily removed ; at the other extreme are the lamentable shortcomings and deficiencies of our primary and grammar schools. No reform in High School teaching can be successful unless it is accompanied by a searching examination into these. But this is not a topic pertinent to this occasion.

I have thus, Mr. Chairman, indicated, at the risk, perhaps, of seeming to some little better than a Utopian dreamer, some of the directions in which I look to see popular education expand, if we are ever to have a popular education worthy of our age and our nation. Utopian my words may well seem, if we compare them with the present results of our school system. Our school system to-day, when we compare the sums lavished upon it, with the actual results it produces, seems to me a monument of wasted power. I know what an inestimable gain it is even to have it. I know that improvement in it must be slow, and must keep pace and can never far outstrip the general progress of the community ; but now it seems to me to lag behind that progress. And it is an encouraging sign that as the questions which have so long agitated us, are one by one being set at rest, and the noise of conflict is dying in the distance, the great permanent interest of education, an interest on which the very salvation of our free institutions depends, is coming so prominently into the foreground. I trust discussion will not cease till all the shortcomings of our schools have been brought to light, and a remedy found for every evil that afflicts them. And in taking measures for the improvement of the particular schools you are considering, allow me to hope that you will take no step which shall contribute in any degree to the intensifying of that foolish and unphilosophical antagonism which is sometimes set up between the claims of Science and the claims of Literature, and by so doing give countenance to an illiberality which is miscalled "liberal" on the one hand, or to an empiricism which is miscalled "practical" on the other.



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